



June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014

## Prevent Heart Disease and Stroke Deaths

Many have heard that heart attacks and strokes are more likely to occur during the winter months, but a new study from Yale School of Public Health is pointing to more than a seasonal variation; fluctuations of temperature and dew point (humidity) seem to play a role. Each temperature drop of more than 3oC resulted in a six percent higher risk of stroke, while dew point increases of 3oC produced a two to three percent higher risk of stroke.

### Reduce Stress and Reduce Risk

High blood pressure is one of the greatest risk factors for strokes and, a significant contributor to high blood pressure is stress! High blood pressure is often called the silent killer as it's often symptom-free until a crisis occurs, but medications and lifestyle changes can make a big difference. Find a relaxation technique you can enjoy and employ to assist: focussed breathing, guided imagery, meditation, yoga, tai chi and repetitive prayer help many.

The reason stress affects health so significantly is not yet well-defined, but it's thought to trigger dangerous inflammatory processes and often leads to poor lifestyle choices (such as unhealthy diet and increased alcohol & smoking). Building de-stressing activities into your lifestyle is key. Make sure you exercise regularly and take breaks from stressors (such as news reports, emails) via hobbies, meditation and other small luxuries. And, stay positive!

### Prevention!

Every seven minutes a Canadian dies from heart disease or stroke according to the Canadian Heart & Stroke Foundation. But the good news is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have estimated that at least 25% of all heart disease and stroke deaths are preventable! While some risk factors are unavoidable (age, sex), these deaths were related to variables that can be changed: quitting smoking, maintaining a healthy body weight, lowering blood pressure and cholesterol and consuming a diet rich in fruits and vegetables and low in salt.

June is Stroke Awareness Month. Your pharmacist is available to assist you in managing your risk factors for stroke. And, of course, there are medications to help you quit smoking and bring your blood pressure and cholesterol under control.